

AROUND THE CORPS IN BRIEF

Iraqi academy graduates cops

CAMP AR RAMADI, Iraq — The Iraqi police force is growing stronger thanks to reserve Marines attached to 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division.

Despite recent attacks against Iraqi security forces, the Ar Ramadi Police Academy here graduated 88 men during a morning ceremony April 22. This is the first class Marines trained since arriving here.

The Iraqi policemen received their training from the Marine instructors, who all serve as full-time law enforcement agents when not on active duty.

“Our job in Iraq is to provide the basics of law enforcement and defense tactics to the Iraqi people,” said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Ron Brown, academy administration officer and instructor.

During the three-week course, students were up before the crack of dawn for physical training or self-defense classes. Then they got down to the basics of police tactics.

“The curriculum includes classes like handcuffing procedures, communications, first aid, building clearing and weapons handling,” explained Brown.

During the graduation ceremony, four of the Iraqi law-enforcement officers were recognized for their actions in fighting enemy forces. Iraqi Capt. Hatim Daham Say’l-Mutaba, Lt. Omar Wahib Jassem, Sgt. Saadi Hamid Shukur and policeman Mutez Jasim Muhammed were given medals of valor for their separate experiences fighting terrorism in Ar Ramadi during the past year.

All of the men received serious wounds during their bouts with terrorists.

The graduates also received recognition for completing the course. They were each given a certificate, uniform and pistol with ammunition.

Mayor liaisons with community

AL ASAD, Iraq — The events occurring behind the scenes of the “Winning the Hearts and Minds” campaign are now unfolding with the help of three Marine reservists with the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing. They work in what has become known as “the mayor cell.”

The crew of Marines includes a colonel, a master gunnery sergeant and a lance corporal, all with different backgrounds but one common mission. They help Iraqi civilians from surrounding areas who seek work opportunities here.

“Al Asad is the largest base [in Iraq],” said Col. Michael A. Thorsby, officer-in-charge, air base staff, 3rd MAW, also known as the mayor. “There might be a few people out there who want to get rich. But quite frankly, the people in this part of the Al Anbar [province] are just looking at getting by.”

He added that, to date, the military has been providing jobs for locals in the area, but not all the towns are benefiting from job opportunities.

Thorsby mentioned that finding work in some towns surrounding here is almost impossible.

“There are very little employment opportunities available [inside the towns],” he added. “They look to Al Asad as something that might help them grow economically or become financially secure.”

According to Master Gunnery Sgt. H. Joseph Wright, deputy mayor and staff non-commissioned officer-in-charge of air base staff, 3rd MAW, Iraq is not an industrious country and needs help in training workers in different occupations.

“They have a good work ethic,” he said. “But their support mechanisms are lacking. For example, [they] have auto mechanics here and they share a screwdriver because they do not have enough tools. If we could get them a tool box, who knows what they would be capable of?”

Marines return to Kharma battlefield

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq — Marines walked the grounds



April 23, where two weeks before, they killed 100 of the enemy.

Marines from 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment moved through Al Kharma, the same small Iraqi city where they met the enemy a week before with devastating firepower.

This time, though, the Marines were greeted with little more than the heavy task of removing and destroying improvised explosive devices.

“We’re serving as a base of fire ... looking for bad guys,” said Lance Cpl. Thomas J. O’Leary, a squad leader with K Company, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment. “But we just haven’t shot any rounds.”

O’Leary said he and his squad believed the battle two weeks ago convinced the enemy to leave the fortified town.

“‘Intel’ said that when we left Karmah, the rest of the insurgents left the city too,” said Lance Cpl. Keegan C. Nace, O’Leary’s assistant squad leader. “They just packed up and left because they thought they would get blocked off like Fallujah.”

The day, although relatively quiet for the company, was successful for the battalion. Marines from 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, discovered and destroyed 62 improvised explosive devices along key routes into Al Kharma. The find was the largest yet for Marines since they deployed to Iraq earlier this year.

Medical team assists Afghans

NAJOY, Afghanistan — In a poverty-stricken rural village near Kandahar Air Field, Afghanistan, doctors and corpsmen from the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) joined coalition forces in providing medical and dental care to Afghan citizens recently.

“We accomplished two things at Najoy,” said Lt. Cmdr. Gary Martin, referring to the 3,000-person village visited by the coalition forces. “First, we assisted them [Romanian and U.S. Army medical teams] medically when we could, and also used the opportunity for some cultural familiarization.”

Martin is the surgeon for MEU Service Support Group 22, the MEU’s combat service support element, and headed up the nine-sailor contribution to the humanitarian effort.

Upon their arrival at the village, and after Afghan National Army forces established security at the site, the sailors joined medical teams from Romania and the Army’s 10th Mountain and 25th Infantry Divisions in setting up an impromptu aid station.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Brian Taylor is with the MEU Command Element and accompanied the small task force’s leadership to a conference with village elders upon their arrival.

According to Taylor, worms, malnutrition, dehydration, stomach problems, and various skin conditions were the most treated ailments.

While Martin, Taylor, and the other male medical specialists primarily observed the Romanian and American soldiers treat Afghan males and children, Chief Petty Officer Dulcie Davis, a Fleet Marine Force-qualified corpsman, headed up a team of female corpsmen who saw female patients separately from the males.

General gives days to end standoff

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq — Lieutenant Gen. James T. Conway, the I Marine Expeditionary Force commanding general, said the people of Fallujah, Iraq, have “days, not weeks” to show progress in complying with the terms of the ceasefire at a press conference here April 22.

The general’s comments came after a turn in of heavy weapons — required under the terms of the ceasefire — yielded little arms, and even fewer that could have been employed against coalition forces.

According to the 1st Marine Division, even though 113 mortar rounds were collected, most were rusted beyond use. Similarly, 21 rocket-propelled grenade projectiles turned in were labeled “inert,” and were simply training rounds.

In contrast, soldiers from the 1st Brigade Combat Team, currently operating in support of the Marine division, recovered numerous weapons systems, including 80 AK-47 assault rifles, in raids near Fallujah. These weapons were in working order, clean, oiled and ready for combat.

The ceasefire was a product of negotiations with civic leaders of Fallujah that began April 17.

Coalition forces agreed to restructure forces to allow greater access to hospitals and begin allowing families to return to their homes, in exchange for a turn-in of “heavy weapons” monitored by the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps and Iraqi Police Service.

“Based upon the fairly paltry turn-in that we saw, we said today there will be no families allowed into the city,” said Conway. “And the people of Fallujah and the

negotiators have to understand that it is a give-and-take process. We’re expected to give certain things and we think we have. We expect certain things in return. And those things - to date - have not been forthcoming.” Marines outside the city remain prepared to continue operations against insurgents in Fallujah if the ceasefire does not hold.

Iraq construction plans laid out

CAMP BLUE DIAMOND, Iraq — Representatives from the Coalition Provisional Authority, I Marine Expeditionary Force and the government of the Al Anbar Province met here Saturday, to discuss future infrastructure reconstruction projects in the region.

The governor of the Al Anbar Province, Abdul Karim Barjis Ezziddeen Al Rawy, attended the meeting and offered his suggestions for the impending efforts.

“We wanted to meet with the government in the region to identify the most important projects to improve the quality of life for the people here,” said Col. Jesse R. Barker, civil affairs coordinator for the 1st Marine Division.

Barjis and his team previously wrote a letter to Iraqi Ambassador Paul Bremer requesting money and aid to the Al Anbar community.

He asked for new schools and healthcare facilities and improvement for the province’s electrical, water and sewage systems.

According to Navy Capt. Mark A. Handley, deputy commander for the I MEF Engineer Group, it’s the mission of the CPA to assist the Iraqi people in the restoration of the country’s infra-

structure.

The CPA’s Project Management Office has been allocated \$540 million for restoration projects in the Al Anbar Province over the next few years.

Additional supplemental funding was recently made available for immediate use in the cities of Ar Ramadi and Fallujah. Both cities have been affected by recent hostilities between Marines and anti-Iraqi fighters.

During the meeting, Barjis made it clear that his people need a new hospital equipped with modern healthcare equipment. He also suggested the improvement for rural roads outside the cities.

Lifters participate in meet in Iraq

CAMP AL ASAD, Iraq — Packing on the pounds became a good thing for Marines here Saturday.

More than 40 service members pushed, moaned and groaned their way through the first bench press invitational meet this year held by Marine Welfare and Recreational Services. It was an open contest that Marines welcomed to break up the humdrum of daily routines.

“It’s great to have competitions like this,” said Lance Cpl. Daniel A. Nieman, a supply administrator with Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron 3, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing. “It makes you get in the gym and also makes time pass by.”

The bench press contest tested lifters’ strength and endurance, while boosting their morale.

Athletes weighed in prior to the contest, received rules, regulations and were told how they

would be scored. The contest was no different than others hosted by Marine bases in the United States.

Staff Sgt. Mike E. Sroka, a radio operator with Combat Service Support Battalion 7, won the competition with a lift of 285 pounds. He walked away with the win weighing in at 147 pounds.

This was the first bench press contest for many of the competitors. Some entered just to do something different. Others used the event to prepare for upcoming contests.

The event was a kick-off for more contests to come, said Jon. C. Williamson, the MWR coordinator for the base. Future bench press events are scheduled for once a month, expanding categories for weight classes with increased participation.

Marines enjoy day of games at park

CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C — The 10th Marine Regiment enjoyed a day of fun and games as they participated in their 4th Annual Big Stix Softball Tournament here April 15.

The Marines played a single elimination tournament with two teams from each of the battalions.

The morning started with a formation run from 10th Marine Regimental Headquarters to the softball fields lead by Col. Thomas L. Cariker, commanding officer, 10th Marine Regiment.

After arriving at their destination, the Marines filed into the stadium by battalion and waited for morning colors to sound.

The tournament started out with 10 teams. Each battalion had an A and B team. The battalions that participated were 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th and Headquarters.

Each game had a 30-minute time limit with 15 minutes in between for warm-ups. Each batter got only one pitch to make the games move along. If the pitch was a ball it was a walk.

If the batter swung and missed or the ball went foul it was an out.

There were three outs per team per inning with no limit on the number of innings. At the end of the allotted time, if the game was tied, the umpire would let them play another inning to try and break the tie.

The competition started at 8 a.m., and the last two teams standing were the A teams from HQ battery and 2/10. It started off with a few runs in the first innings. Then 2/10 exploded with a barrage of hits and a home run in the fourth. With a score of 10 to two, 2/10 defeated HQ.

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